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II.—*The Uses of the Imperfect Indicative in Plautus and Terence.*

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FOR the statement of past events the Latin language possesses five tenses, the imperfect, perfect, and pluperfect, to which must be added the so-called historical present and historical infinitive. In the earliest known period of Latin, the aorist, possessed by both Sanskrit and Greek, has already passed out of use as a distinct tense, although traces of an aorist still remain in the formation of some Latin perfects (cf. Stolz in I. Müller's *Handbuch des klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Vol. II. p. 370). The functions of the lost aorist are therefore to be sought among the functions of the five tenses before mentioned, just as some functions of the lost optative are found in the Latin subjunctive. The first tense suggesting itself as possessing aoristic functions is, of course, the perfect, which still preserves traces of an aoristic formation, and this, as is well known, is one of the common uses of the Latin perfect. To distinguish this from other uses of the perfect the hearer or reader relied on the context of spoken or written speech.

But from the nature of language it is not probable that the perfect was the only tense to absorb aoristic functions. Other tenses may have received their share, and even the most unlikely, the pluperfect, has been shown by Blase (*Geschichte des Plusquamperfekts*) to have possessed occasionally the aoristic function. We may expect the same to be true, perhaps even to a greater extent, of the imperfect.

Before discussing the uses of the imperfect in Plautus and Terence, it is necessary to say a word about the method by which the cases were classified. Experience has taught the writer that a classification the basis of which is function, is of

very little use in an investigation of the tenses. The best results are reached by making the individual verb the basis of classification. All cases of each verb were placed together and divided into three classes according as they occurred in independent, dependent, or interrogative sentences. The dependent clauses were further subdivided according to the introducing word, and the interrogative sentences separated into two classes composed respectively of sentence-questions and questions introduced by various forms of *quis*. To the groups of individual verbs thus arranged was applied in succession a cross-classification according to function. Though apparently complicated, this system is both simple and natural, and so elastic that it is capable of enlargement in any direction without disturbing its general features. The cases from Plautus and Terence were kept separate with a view to possible historical results.

Excluding all cases rendered doubtful by interpolation, corrupt text, etc., and admitting that in the examination of so large a body of text some cases may have escaped unnoticed, there remain in Plautus and Terence 609 cases of the imperfect indicative. Of these 371 occur in independent, 182 in dependent, and 56 in interrogative sentences. An investigation of these cases shows that the imperfect in Plautus and Terence had two general uses:

1st. The true imperfect, denoting an act as taking place or progressing, or of some considerable duration, at some past time contemporaneous with some other act or state either expressed or felt in the context, *e.g.* **Davus dicebat**, *Davus was saying*, or **Davus sentiebat**, *Davus felt* (for some appreciable time). The uses of the imperfect called frequentative, conative, inceptive, etc., are all mere phases of this simple use.

2d. The aoristic imperfect, denoting an act as past without creating any impression that it was progressing or of any emphasized duration, *e.g.* **Davus aiebat se redisse**, *Davus said that he had returned*. In this use the imperfect appears as a tense of simple statement, a mere preterite, and seems to differ not at all from the aoristic perfect.

Of the 609 cases 507 are true imperfects, 102 aoristic, a

proportion of about 5 : 1. Considering the 371 independent cases separately, 299 are true imperfects, 72 aoristic, about 4 : 1. Thus the aoristic use comprises between one-fourth and one-fifth of the cases. As true imperfects of the simple progressive type may be cited (following the smaller Teubner text ed. by Goetz and Schoell):

Asin. 927,

Modo, quom dicta in me *ingerebas*, odium, non uxor *eram*.

Amph. 383,

ME. Amphitruonis te esse *aiebas* Sosiam. So. Peccaveram.

Men. 1053,

MESS. Quin modo
Erupui, homines qui *ferebant* te . . .
Apud hasce aedis — tu *clamabas* deum fidem.

Ter. Andr. 88 (Dziatzko's text),

Phaedrum aut Cliniam
Dicebant aut Nicaretum ; nam hi tres tum simul
Amabant.

This, well known as the most common use of the imperfect, includes 373, or over half, of the total 609 cases. Viewing separately once more the 371 independent cases, 210, or about two-thirds, belong to this class.

It is interesting to note the ratio between the true imperfect and the aoristic imperfect in different groups of verbs. Taking true imperfect in its broader meaning, as including the frequentative, conative, etc., uses, and considering first the independent cases, in verbs of colorless meaning, *e.g. eram, aiebam*, there are 92 cases of the true imperfect against 65 of the aoristic. The proportion is roughly 3 : 2. Turning now to verbs of clear and definite meaning, *e.g. volo, curro, mitto*, the ratio rises to 208 : 5, or over 40 : 1. From this it is at once evident that there is a most intimate relation between verb-meaning and tense-force, and that in verbs of colorless character tense-force is at its minimum. In verbs of clear and definite meaning, on the other hand, tense-force is

usually clear. Or, stated differently, in colorless verbs the vagueness of meaning obscures the force of the tense; in verbs of definite meaning, tense-force and verb-meaning are mutually helpful. *Eram* often differs not at all from *fui*, but *agebam* usually differs clearly from *egi*. This truth is still further emphasized by the fact that *aiebam* (*aio* has no perfect), the most colorless of a list of over 200 verbs, is overwhelmingly used in the aoristic sense, the ratio being 40:9, or about 4:1, while in verbs denoting physical action, whose meaning is always definite, the ratio is even more decidedly the other way, the true imperfects outnumbering the aoristic 25:1.

And not only does the meaning of the individual verb affect the force of the tense, but a like effect is produced also by particles like *iam*, *iam pridem*, *primum*, *statim*, *semper*, by clauses introduced by *cum*, *dum*, etc., and in fact by the whole context. Such outside influences often reveal the true force of the tense where otherwise it would be obscure. At times such words in reality carry the force which might, at first sight, be assigned to the tense. As instances of the enlightening force of surrounding words and clauses may be cited: Rudens, 846,

Etiamne in ara tunc *sedebant* mulieres
Quom ad me profectu's ire?

Here the force of *sedebant* is clearly defined and revealed by *Etiam . . . tunc*, and by the clause with *quom*. So also in Cist. 566,

Iam *perducebam* illam ad me suadela mea,
Anus ei (quom) amplexast genua.

Here *iam* defines the force of *perducebam*. But this principle receives even better illustration in those cases where the imperfect denotes customary past action, to which we now turn.

In the total of 609 cases, 86 are instances of this use, 57 of which occur in independent sentences. They form about one-sixth of the true imperfects. The best passage in Plautus to

illustrate this use is Asin. 204 ff., where the young man, Argyrippus, is contrasting his present treatment at the hands of the women with that which he used to receive. A part of the passage runs :

Tum mi aedes quoque *arridebant*, quom ad te veniebam, tuae.
 Me unice unum ex omnibus te atque illam amare ai[e]bas mihi
 Ubi quid dederam, quasi columbæ pulli in ore ambae meo
 Usque *eratis* : meo de studio studia *erant* vostra omnia.
 Usque *adhaerebatis* : quod ego iusseram, quod volueram,
Faciebatis : quod nolebam ac votueram, de industria
Fugiebatis neque conari id facere audebatis prius.
 Nunc neque quid velim neque nolim facitis magni, pessumae.

Like the progressive use this imperfect of customary past action predominates in those classes of verbs having clear and definite meaning. The assertion that this usage is developed out of the progressive use, of which it is but a variant, receives support when we discover that the tense preserves the same progressive or durative force, and that the customary past idea is really dependent for its inception upon a contrast between present and past. If we inject into a sentence like *facit, sed non faciebat* a stronger temporal contrast by adding particles of time, e.g. *nunc facit, olim autem non faciebat*, it is at once clear how the imperfect of customary past action may originate in the progressive use. An imperfect of customary past action implies that such a temporal contrast must exist and some considerable time must have elapsed between the time of the imperfect and that of the tense with which it is contrasted. It is impossible to say: He used to do it just now! How necessary a contrast is to this usage is strikingly indicated by the fact that about half of the cases are accompanied by one or often by two particles tending to emphasize the contrast. Such particles are *tunc, tum, olim, antehac*, etc., and a present contrasted with the imperfect is often accompanied by *iam, nunc*, etc. Cases like Men. 729,

At mihi *negabas* dudum surrupuisse te,
 Nunc ea(n)dem ante oculos attines :

where there is a contrast but no customary past idea, may be regarded as transitional cases between the simple progressive and customary past uses of the imperfect.

The influence of verb-meaning upon tense-force is well illustrated in this class :

MEN. 1123,

MES. Uno nomine ambo eratis? MEN. I. Minime : nam mihi hoc erat

Quod nunc est, Menaechmo. illum tum *vocabant* Sosiclem.

Voco, in this sense, is a verb well suited to express customary past action. When placed in the imperfect, meaning and tense are mutually helpful. The same is true of the numerous verbs of frequentative, intensive, and other like formations, e.g. *dictito*, *victito*, *capesso*, etc. The most striking instances, however, are afforded by the verbs *soleo*, *adsuesco*, *consuesco*, etc. These verbs not only aid, but dominate, the force of the imperfect, for they mean "to be accustomed." Phormio, 89,

In quo haec discebat ludo, exadvorsum ilico

Tonstrina erat quaedam, hic *solebamus* fere

Plerumque eam opperiri dum inde iret domum.

Here we have it heaped up with all the power of colloquial idiom—the verb *soleo*, the tense, *fere*, *plerumque*. This is the only case of the imperfect of *soleo* in Terence, and there is but one in Plautus, a fact not surprising when it is remembered that it is unnecessary to put the verb in the imperfect in order to produce the customary past idea. These verbs possess the same force in the perfect, and when occurring in the imperfect the force is but increased. The perfect, cases of which I am collecting, will probably show many more instances. It would be interesting to note what is the ratio between cases like *faciebam* = I used to make, and *facere solitus sum*. Present indications incline me to the belief that cases of *facere solitus sum* would greatly outnumber those where the customary past idea is expressed by the tense alone (*faciebam*). Furthermore it would seem that the imperfect

did not originally contain within itself the idea of customary past action. The mere existence in the language of such verbs as *soleo*, *adsuesco*, etc., and the frequent presence of defining particles, as noted before, would seem to indicate that this function of the imperfect needed definition, and is probably of relatively late origin.

There remain four other varieties of the true imperfect which deserve mention, although the cases of each are too few to form the basis of any absolutely certain conclusions. The first of these is what I have called the frequentative use, classing as frequentative those cases where the imperfect seems to denote repeated, incessant, or persistent action, *e.g.* Rudens, 540,

LABRAX. Tibi auscultavi : tu *promittebas* mihi
 Illi esse quaestum maxumam meretricibus
 Ibi me conruere posse aiebas di[vi]tias.

The cases of this usage number about a score. Another usage, closely allied, and yet really differing, is that which, for want of a better name, may be called the 'occasional' imperfect. Here the tense denotes that the action of the verb is repeated, but only at considerable and more or less regular intervals *occasioned* by some other act. A citation will make this clearer: Poenulus, 481 ff.,

In fundos visci *indebant* . . . globos :
 Eo illos volantis iussi funditarier.
 Quid multa verba? Quemquem visco offenderant,
 Tam crebri ad terram | *accidebant* quam pira.
 Ut quisque acciderat, eum *necabam* | ilico
 Per cerebrum pinna sua sibi quasi turturem.

Here the tense describes a method of action, what would on certain occasions take place, best rendered by the English auxiliary 'would' (cf. Men. 484, Andr. 109). There are 19 instances of this use. It is often difficult to distinguish the frequentative from the occasional, and indeed all the varieties of true imperfect merge into each other so imperceptibly that classification is often very difficult.

There are only two instances among my cases where the imperfect seems to have conative force, and two likewise where it seems inceptive. So far as this goes it would indicate that perhaps too much importance has been attached to these uses by the grammars—particularly to the conative use. A good instance of the latter is Asin. 931,

ART. Iam subrupuisti pallam quam scorto dares?

PHIL. Ecaptor qui subrupturum pallam promisit tibi.

DE. Non taces? ARG. Ego *dissuadebam*, mater. ART. Bellum filium.

As an instance of the inceptive usage may be quoted Merc. 43,

Amare valide coepi[t]hic meretricem. ilico

Res exulatum ad illam <c>lam *abibat* patris :

In all these subdivisions of the true imperfect the tense-force is often subject to the influence of particles, clauses, and verb-meaning. In the frequentative use especially the large number of frequentative verbs is noticeable. In some of these the strong frequentative force has been worn out already in Plautus' time, but enough remains in most cases to aid the force of the imperfect whenever such verbs occur in that tense. Here again, as in the discussion of *soleo*, the possibility presents itself that this function also was of relatively late origin. Else why should the language have possessed so many separate verb-formations expressing the same idea? That it is the function of the tense which is late, and not the frequentative formation, seems clearly established by the wealth of frequentative and kindred formations in Sanskrit, indicating probably that they extend back into the Indo-European.

The aoristic use has already been defined, and it is only necessary here to cite a few illustrations : Poenulus, 1069,

AG. An mortui sunt? HA. Factum : quod . . . aegre tuli :

Nam mihi sobrina Ampsigura tua mater fuit,

Pater tuos is *erat* frater patruelis meus,

Et is me heredem fecit, quom suom obiit diem.

Erat seems exactly equal in value to *fuit* in the preceding line and *fecit* in the following. There are several other passages where *eram* and *fui* occur side by side in this way.

Two more citations may suffice for our present purpose. Most. 1027,

SI. Te velle uxorem *aiebat* tuo nato dare :

Ideo aedificare hoc velle *aiebat* in tuis.

TH. Hic aedificare volui? SI. Sic dixit mihi.

Poenulus, 900,

Et ille qui eas vendebat dixit se furtivas vendere :

Ingenuas Carthagine *ai[e]bat* esse.

In a number of other passages both *dixit* and *aiebat* are expressed, as in these two, with apparently no difference in tense-force. The verb *aio* in fifty-seven out of sixty cases is a mere sign-post to indicate the indirect discourse — hence it is almost entirely colorless.

This aoristic use of the imperfect, which seems to be established for at least two verbs, *aio* and *sum*, and of which sporadic instances have been noted in other verbs, seems to be exactly equivalent to the perfect indefinite, as indeed the citations show. A more complete collection of cases will in all likelihood prove the existence of this use, at least occasionally, in a large number of verbs.

The chief results of this paper may be briefly summed up as follows:

1. *The imperfect indicative is comparatively rare in Plautus and Terence. In Plautus it occurs on the average about once in every fifty lines, in Terence once in every thirty lines.* This may be explained partly by the fact that other tenses, especially the historical present and historical infinitive, take its place, partly from the nature of the drama, the action of which is largely in the present.

2. *Speaking broadly, the imperfect has two general uses:*

(1) *The true imperfect, subdivided into progressive (a), customary past (b), frequentative (c), occasional (d), conative (e), and inceptive (f).*

- (2) *The aoristic use, proved only in the case of two verbs, eram and aiebam.*

The true imperfect is vastly in the majority in those verbs possessing clear and definite meanings, while the aoristic use occurs most frequently in colorless verbs. This suggests:

3. *There is a most intimate connection between the meaning of a verb and the force of its tenses. Closely connected with this is the influence of particles, clauses—in fact the whole environment.* These principles should be applied in all investigations of the functions of the tenses.